



GEORGE L. MOSS of Calhoun, a survivor of the attack on Pearl Harbor 25 years ago,

visits the memorial to Jones County's war dead at the Laurel VFW Post. Moss was aboard the USS Oklahoma when it was

capsized and sunk in the Japanese attack.

(Leader-Call Staff Photo)

Vets Recall Pearl Harbor

By SUE DeLOACH
Staff Writer

It was 7:55 a.m. The ships of the U.S. Fleet in the Pacific were resting in Pearl Harbor after joint Army-Navy war games.

Men on the ships were getting ready for liberty, as were the men at Hickam and Wheeler Fields and at Fort Kamehameha at the harbor's mouth.

Suddenly, Japanese planes came out of the sky and ended the peace with their bombs, torpedoes and bullets — not only at Pearl Harbor but all over the United States.

Almost everyone remembers where they were and what they were doing when they heard the news of the attack — but some Jones Countians have even more vivid memories of that day 25 years ago, Dec. 7, 1941. They were there.

George L. Moss of the Calhoun Community and Paul Carlisle of Laurel were among those who had ringside seats for the United States' forced entry into World War II.

A NAVY FIREMAN
Moss, a Navy Fireman First

Class, was aboard the USS Oklahoma waiting for a motor launch to take him ashore for liberty.

"I was standing on the main deck aft," he said. "I saw the planes coming, but I thought they were U.S. planes on maneuvers. We had just finished a series of war games. After the planes dropped their bombs on the 'Oklahoma' I could see the Japanese pilots. Then the general alarm sounded."

The "Oklahoma" was one of nine battleships in the harbor sunk or seriously damaged. After it was hit, it capsized and sank.

The same motor launches that were to take the men ashore for a day off saved the survivors' lives. Moss remembers falling into the oily water as his ship capsized.

Carlisle, a sergeant with the 41st Coastal Artillery, U.S. Army, was stationed at Ft. Kamehameha, located next to Hickam Field. Hickam was one of the main Japanese targets.

"I didn't realize the Japanese attack was a real raid until it was about 10 or 15 minutes old," Carlisle said. "We had just come off of joint maneuvers, and I thought some Navy planes were just fooling around."

He said he realized what was happening when he saw the smoke coming from the harbor where the stricken ships were burning. All of the action that day was within a five-minute radius of the fort.

AMONG THE LUCKY

Moss and Carlisle were among the lucky ones. During the hour and 50 minute attack, 2,409 men died. Over a thousand of these men were trapped aboard sinking ships. More U.S. servicemen died at Pearl Harbor than in the Spanish-American, World War One and Korean wars combined.

Moss, a lift truck operator in Masonite's Tempering Unit No. 3, almost had a souvenir. Later in the war, when he was stationed aboard the USS "Blue", the government sent him a rubber stamp imprinted with his name, used for marking clothing, they had found when the "Oklahoma" was salvaged.

But the "Blue", a destroyer, was sunk in the Solomon Islands, and the stamp was again lost. The "Oklahoma" sunk again as it was being towed back to the States.

Moss and his wife, the former Ruthie Lee Bush, are both natives of Jones County.

Moss was transferred to the "Blue" after Pearl Harbor and was in on the first U.S. attack in the Pacific, the raid on Marshall and Gilbert Islands. He also saw action in the Palau Islands, Okinawa and the Philippines.

He enlisted in August, 1940, 14 months before Pearl Harbor. He had been in Hawaii four months before the attack.